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Washington Calling . . . By Marquis Childs

The Campaign and the President's Safety

WITH THE Goldwater strategists preparing a detailed personal attack on President Johnson as the centerpiece of their campaign, a consideration that almost no one talks about publicly cannot be ignored. That is the personal safety of the President in the midst of a bitterly fought election campaign.



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This concern is underscored by the fact that there has been no Vice President since Nov. 22. Next in line for the office until a new President and Vice President are inaugurated in January is the Speaker of the House, John W. McCormack, who will be 73 years old in December.

The members of the President's commission on the assassination of John F. Kennedy are just now giving serious concern to this question. A chapter in the report will deal with the security of the President and the importance of educating the public on the need for measures to try to reduce risks.

No one can compel the President to accept security measures such as an armored car and restraints on his movements. President Johnson has been especially resentful of the hedge that the Secret Service tries to throw around him. But all Presidents have in one degree or another fought the idea that they must be protected from would-be assassins.

MEMBERS of the commission believe public pressure can be brought to bear to persuade a President that he must accept protection of a broader nature, not only for his good, but for the good of the Nation. Allen Dulles, former head of the CIA and a member of the commission, suggested this in a recent interview.

The commission report also will deal with the atmosphere of hate in Dallas at the time of Mr. Kennedy's assassination. A study of presidential assassins shows that weak, sick minds are inspired to desperate measures at the time the national climate is inflamed by violent controversy.

Members of the commission are reading Robert J. Donovan's fascinating "The Assassins." Four Presidents—Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy—have been murdered. Theodore Roosevelt was shot and wounded in the campaign of 1912. Between his election and his inauguration, Franklin D. Roosevelt was fired on by an assassin in Miami, who hit and killed Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago.

The personal attack that the Goldwater camp intends to aim at every facet of Mr. Johnson's past—his political rise, his wealth, even his war record—suggests that the atmosphere in October will indeed be inflamed. The objective is, of course, to try to force a sensitive President to reply in kind—to throw him off balance.

Mr. Johnson has said that he will not indulge in name-calling and he has cautioned the members of his Cabinet against personal attacks on the Republican candidate, Barry M. Goldwater. Nevertheless, such attacks will come from many sources. Fear and suspicion of Goldwater are evident as the word "fascism" is bandied about. He will not be immune from threats of violence.

ONE PROBLEM, which the President's commission may or may not discuss in its report, is the increasing and unregulated dissemination of firearms throughout the country. The Minutemen and similar organizations are openly acquiring arms theoretically in readiness to repulse a Communist takeover. Evidence shows that many members are fanatical rightists.

In the past, they have had some intellectual rationalization for their action. Karl Hess, who wrote Goldwater's acceptance speech with its defense of extremism, as a contributor to the American Mercury when it was published by Russell Maguire, wrote the following ten years ago:

"It would not be America really if it did not produce men who suddenly tire of palaver and reach for the rifle on the wall, to use themselves or to hand to the underdog who needs it."

The report of the President's commission, to be released on Sept. 14 through the White House, will be a monumental work.

The report itself will be at least 300 printed pages in length. With it will go 15 volumes of appendices and footnotes. For the bipartisan commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, it had been a difficult, demanding and often a painful task.

On the eve of what many have predicted will be the most savage campaign in our political history, the report should be a warning taken with the utmost seriousness of the perils of lawlessness, violence and hatred. It could serve as a sober and restraining influence in the weeks ahead.

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